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But society at large is injured by the preservation of old institutions and traditions merely because they are old. The man who tries to hold his generation to a belief in and love for an outworn idea, on the plea that it was once vital, is a public enemy and should be so regarded. The man who stands up in this age of marvelous progress and laments the glories of the past is unworthy to bear a hand in the work of the modern world. He is either a dreamer, a sciolist, or a crank. I believe in burying what is old and surrounding ourselves with what is new. If it could be proved that the ground occupied by the Pyramids was needed for the development of the race, I should be in favor of tearing down the meaningless old heaps of stones within twenty-four hours. And in place of the picturesque old dwelling-houses of so many European cities, saturated as many of them are with the disease-germs of half a score of generations, I would like to see newly-built houses, with modern improvements and modern conveniences. Interesting as may be the old house of your grandfather, from an archaeological point of view, it cannot compare in comfort and luxury with the house that you can build to-day. The lovers of the past are constantly mourning over the obliteration of old landmarks, especially in our great cities. They actually seem to think that the growth of a great metropolis like New York is a crime because, forsooth, it demands the demolition of some old colonial building whose usefulness has long ago departed. They do not understand that constant and continuous change is the mark of true progress, and that to stand still is to go backward. Let us, if we will, hoard the heirlooms and relics of the past in our museums, where we can look at them when we have nothing better to do. They will, at least, teach us how far we have advanced since the days when these things were considered the master-pieces of human skill. But do not let us, out of a morbid reverence for the past, cumber the earth with useless monuments and buildings whose only value is their age. Do not let us perpetuate laws and customs and traditions in our social and political life, whose only excuse for being is that, a hundred years ago, or two hundred years ago, they were the very efflorescence of human wisdom.

The application of my little homily is this : Do not feel any secret pangs of guilt because you share in the iconoclastic spirit of the American people. Rather rejoice because that spirit has been so largely manifested in the destruction of old institutions, in the abrogation of old laws, in the suspension of old customs, in the breaking-down of old lines of caste, in the death of old superstitions, and in the cutting-loose of the American Republic from so many of the outworn ideas and ideals of the old world. There is still a great work for the American iconoclast to do in politics, art, science, commerce, sociology, and religion. I hope he will do it so fearlessly, so effectively, and so wisely, that in the great American Republic of the future not a vestige of the old abuses and the old falsehoods will remain.

PERCY DOUGLAS.

II.

ILLUSTRIOUS SECONDS.

WHEN a new writer appears and succeeds in attracting attention, the public, having read, praised, criticised, busies itself with his (or her) classification. What is this? Have we a new George Eliot? an American George Sand? an Anglicized Gautier? a reëmbodied Milton? The public, when thus rummaging among the crowded store-rooms of its brain, let it be understood, intends to be friendly and complimentary. If any one advanced the idea that it was heaping insult upon the new and would-be original author, and giving him a seat in the school-room where he aspired to be a master, it would flout the idea with scorn. And as the public will inevitably go on comparing and classifying, the author must look out for himself and not give it the opportunity. As a matter of fact, however, nine out of ten authors can be classified very readily; it is the tenth's inability to be filed that gives him the position of master instead of pupil, and a chance to live.

Every woman who has written a striking novel in England during the past ten years has been hailed as a second George Eliot. These women have doubtless been flattered, and have not realized that in resembling George Eliot they must ever re-

main Number 2, if for no other reason than because George Eliot had won her immortality before they were heard of. Lucas Mallet, Vernon Lee, Mrs. Ward, have all been relegated to the ranks of illustrious seconds, with the banner of George Eliot waving above them. Olive Schreiner alone refuses to be classified, and judging by this significant fact, as well as by the inherent qualities of her work, one may venture to assert that of the four she alone will live.

Over here we have our—so-called—American Eliots, Zolas, Balzacs, Gautiers, Shakespeares, Thackerays, and even Swinburnes, Ouidas, Rhoda Broughtons, and Blackmores. They all bear that superficial and fascinating resemblance to the originals which a wax apple bears to a real apple, and at least have the satisfaction of being the fads of a day. For this quality of reproduction has a certain temporary value. The great reading world is not creative; consequently not particular about absolute originality. It knows what it likes from habit and is slow to make up its mind to like anything radically new. Naturally, therefore, when a new writer, who has modelled himself upon a great master or a familiar favorite, bursts into being, the public recognizes the flavor at once and is eager to enjoy and appreciate. That the old dish is made by a new cook is a recommendation in its favor, for the world does not object to that light rate of originality which exists in the average author's personality. It is perfectly willing to prophesy a great future for the novice; but always reasoning from the same premise—the meteor resembles an acknowledged and fixed star. And what is the result? The meteors shoot forth and drop, shoot forth and drop, and we all go back to the fixed stars.

Ten thousand dramas have been written on Shakespearean lines since Shakespeare laid down his pen. Many won praise and shekels for the authors. Where are they now? What are the authors' names? Does any one remember? What does the world want of imitations of Shakespeare when it can get Shakespeare himself? Some day a greater man than Shakespeare will be born—but he will in no wise resemble Shakespeare.

All great writers have imitated here and there, but always consciously and for their own amusement solely. Many of these reproductions have been very brilliant, but upon no one of them has the fame of an author ever rested. When Coleridge wrote his remarkable paraphrase of the Bible, "The Wanderings of Cain," it was undoubtedly an event in the literary world, and brought him much praise; but if Coleridge had never written "Christabel," or "The Ancient Mariner," or "Kubla Khan," what niche in literature's temple would Coleridge occupy to-day? Byron, in his "Heaven and Earth," wrote a description of the flood which for dramatic power, vivid portrayal, and stupendous strength, far exceeds the Bible's picture; but because the flood had been the Bible's peculiar property for hundreds of years before Byron was born, so it will continue to hold its rights to the end of time. To come down in the scale, "St. Elmo" and "Rutledge" owed their great vogue to the popularity of "Jane Eyre" and the inspiration their authors drew from that famous novel. The Duchess and Helen Mathers pressed their lips to the fever-stricken mouth of Rhoda Broughton and took the disease in a milder form. Rita and Amélie Rives have snatched the falling mantle of Ouida, divided it in half, and wound it so closely about themselves that it has become an extra cuticle and could only be removed by a surgical operation.

Great original genius is only recognized and admitted after a desperate fight, because there is no greater coward than the intellectual public. The well-furnished and critical brain has every shelf of its cells fitted up with the lore upon which centuries or generations of public approval have set their seal. It knows that to admire that choice library is both safe and proper; it gives one dignity and it gives one pleasure. Anything, therefore, which is radically different from the inhabitants of those precious shelves must perforce be worthless. People do not stop to compare or even to remember the difference between the succeeding literatures of past generations. Think of the monotony of the world's letters if no original minds had ever come to break loose from traditions, inaugurate new schools, and plant new ideas! Suppose the glorious galaxy now illuminating our Past had succumbed to the inevitable fire of public protestation,—what sort of a literature would we have to-day?

Unquestionably the literature of one generation, even of one decade, is the natural result of the literature immediately preceding it: evolution is inexorable. But upon this force of heredity operate the great and complex forces of the times, and the man who is thrust head and shoulders above the mass, as the target of his generation and a landmark for posterity, is he in whom both forces have met and been ignited by the divine spark that shot in his unborn brain, whence no man can tell.

GERTRUDE FRANKLIN ATHERTON.

III.

THE POLITICS NEAREST HOME.

IS THERE not something beyond mere accident, or coincidence, in the widespread interest suddenly manifested in America in the question of the government of cities? There seems to be the action of a sociological law in this; for it may be observed that when the time is ripe for a political or social advance the movement begins to assert itself, not at one point alone, but with a sort of spontaneity in various portions of the National mass. It cannot be denied that in the practical government of cities some of the leading European countries are now far in advance of us. This acknowledgment strikes something of a blow at our National pride—or vanity; for we have been so accustomed to regard ourselves as the political models for the world that it seems humiliating to have to concede the superiority of others in any respect. Therefore, while allowing the fact, many of us have been disposed to ascribe it to the fundamental difference between European and American theories of government, and to say that, while great European cities were undoubtedly better governed than ours, the free spirit of the American people would never tolerate the application of such methods here. But if this were true, would it not be a very unfortunate confession of American incapacity? Would it not give the lie to our professed ability to surpass the rest of the world under an equality of opportunities? Fortunately for us, this excuse is not valid. It is not owing to monarchical institutions that European cities are better governed than ours. Those cities are old democracies and the parents of our modern republicanism; self-government maintained itself in them while despotism ruled the land, and it is because of their methods of responsible self-government that their affairs are now so well administered.

It is a healthful sign that this sense of our defects has aroused an active interest in the question of municipal government. If the body politic be diseased, its ills will show themselves most keenly in the parts most immediately concerning the public; and if the very foundation be defective, we can hardly hope for a sound National structure. It is well, therefore, that we are becoming aroused from our self-complacency and made to see plainly that, of all the countries calling themselves enlightened, our own free land has the distinction of possessing the worst-governed cities.

Two important courses of lectures on municipal government, given in Boston and Providence, have commanded exceptional attention far beyond the public to whom they were directly addressed, and the subject has otherwise been widely discussed and studied throughout the country. In the comparisons between European and American methods, made by several of the lecturers, data have been made prominent that plainly show the reasons for the excellencies on the one hand and the defects on the other. The differences lie both in system and in functions. In the chief cities of Great Britain and Germany—the countries furnishing the best examples of model municipal government—the business-like organization is notable. While our system of frequent elections and short terms of both officials and popular representatives puts a premium on inexperience and incapacity, the purpose of theirs is to secure men of experience and capacity at the head of affairs. Their city councils are permanent bodies, only a certain proportion of the members retiring periodically, so that even should none of them be reelected, there always remain a majority of men familiar with the public business. The other features of their governments are likewise arranged with a view to the best efficiency, and we see the fruits in the economy and thoroughness with which affairs are administered, as against the extravagance and